DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 155 216 TM 007 345

AUTHOR Irilli, Joseph P.; And Others
TITLE Students' Expectations: Ratings of Teacher Performance as Biased by Teachers' Physical Attractiveness.
PUB DATE [Mar 78]
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (62nd, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, March 27-31, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Age; *Bias; Childhood Attitudes; Elementary School Students; Elementary School Teachers; *Expectation; Grade 3; Performance Factors; *Physical Characteristics; Primary Education; Questionnaires; Sex (Characteristics); Sex Differences; *Student Attitudes; *Student Evaluation of Teacher Performance; Student Teacher Relationship; *Teacher Characteristics; Teacher Influence
IDENTIFIERS *Physical Attractiveness

ABSTRACT

A 21-item questionnaire was designed to determine the effects of teachers' sex, age and physical attractiveness on primary students' expectations of teacher performance. The questionnaire, administered to 144 third grade students, included photographs of male and female teachers who varied in age and physical attractiveness. The students were asked to look at the photographs before rating the teachers' discipline, fairness, kindness, and instructional ability. Sample questionnaire items are appended. Age and sex were not found to bias the evaluation of teacher performance. However, physical attractiveness had a singular effect on the evaluations. Attractive teachers, especially those who were young, were rated as superior teachers to those who were unattractive. The students also felt that attractive teachers would be more fun, more interesting, more comfortable to be with, and more willing to play games with them. The high rating of attractive teachers was the result of a single visual cue, rather than the interaction of age, sex and appearance variables. The implications of teacher attractiveness on student behavior and achievement are discussed. (JAG)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

32.08

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Joseph P. Irilli

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

ED155216

Students' Expectations: Ratings of Teacher Performance as Biased by Teachers' Physical Attractiveness.

Joseph P. Irilli
Trumbull County Board of Education
Warren, Ohio

Thomas J. Kehle and John Guidubaldi
Kent State University

TM007 345

Students' Expectations: Ratings of Teacher Performance as Biased by Teachers' Physical Attractiveness.

Joseph P. Irilli
Trumbull County Board of Education
Warren, Ohio

Thomas J. Kehle and John Guidubaldi
Kent State University

The study investigated the effects of teachers' sex, age, and physical attractiveness on male and female students' expectations of teacher performance utilizing a 2x3x2x2 factorial design. The 144 third grade students were randomly assigned to 1 of 24 treatment conditions. Teacher attractiveness was defined through interjudge agreement on ratings of photographs. Selected photographs were then attached to a 21 item questionnaire which assessed students' expectations of teacher performance. Based on the findings, children's expectations were most influenced by the variable of teacher's physical attractiveness. The children expected attractive teachers to be better teachers, more interesting, more fun, more comfortable to be with, more willing to play games with them and generally superior to unattractive teachers. These findings were in contrast to other investigations that state expectancy formation in adults is the result of complex interactions among variables. It was suggested that expectations in children develop along a continuum from single visible cues, such as attractiveness, to eventually include, in adulthood, complex interactions among numerous variables.

Although considerable attention has been directed to the effect of teachers' expectation on students' performance, there is a dearth of literature concerning the effect of teacher variables on students' expectations for teacher behaviors. Whereas, the impact of teachers' expectations has been suggested by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1966) who reported that teacher expectations influenced students' I.Q. scores, other studies have failed to replicate this phenomenon (e.g. Clairborn, 1969; Fleming & Anttonen, 1971). The failure of replication perhaps is due to the complexity of expectancy formation in adults (Mason, 1972; Finn, 1972; Kehle, Bramble & Mason, 1974). Thus the exact nature of the effects of teachers' expectations is still unknown as Fleming and Anttonen (1971) have suggested:

> ...the way in which teachers influence pupil behavior appears to be a far more subtle and complex phenomenon than some have suggested. The body of knowledge and attitudes of the teachers about testing, their personal characteristics and ways of dealing with children seem to be far more critical for pupil growth than external intervention per se.

The central position of the present study is that expectancy research can be meaningfully extended through the investigation of the student's role in the expectancy process. In contrast to previous research which examined the impact of teacher's impressions of the child, the present study examined whether obvious person characteristics of the teacher affect the child's expectations regarding the manner in which the teacher will react to him. These teacher characteristics may, in fact, promote a "self-fulfilling prophecy" on the part of the child in regard to his anticipation of success or failure in the particular teacher's classroom environment. Further it was assumed that expectancy formation in children would not involve the complex interactions found in similar designs employing adults as subjects.

Method

Subjects

One hundred and forty-four third-grade students (72 males and 72 females) were randomly selected from three school districts representing white, middle class suburban communities.

Design

The students were randomly assigned to one of 24 treatment conditions representing a 2 x 3 x 2 x 2 factorial design involving: (1) sex of the teacher (male or female); (2) age of the teacher (young, middle, or old); (3) attractiveness of the teacher (attractive or unattractive); and finally, (4) sex of the student (male or female). The dependent measure was a 21 item, four response mode questionnaire that was designed to measure students' expectations of teacher behavior (i.e.; teacher's discipline, fairness, instructional ability, kindness, homework, etc.).

Procedure

The independent variables of teachers' sex, age, and attractiveness were conveyed to the subjects by attaching 12 professionally made photographs of teachers to the questionnaires. Attractiveness and age, as depicted in the photographs, was defined through analyses of concordance of thirty judges. The judges rank ordered (using a modified Q-sort technique) 250 photographs of teachers on the dimensions of attractiveness and age. The highest and lowest mean ratings of physical attractiveness in each of the three age categories as a function of sex resulted in the identification of the 12 different photographs. The questionnaires with the respective attached photographs were distributed to the subjects with oral instructions to look at the teacher's picture prior to responding to each question.

Results

The analysis considered both a cumulative score on 18 of the 21 questions (the three omitted questions were validity checks on the variables of attractiveness and age) and each question separately. The summary of the analysis of variance employing the cumulative questionnaire score is presented in Table 1. As indicated in Table 1 the only variable producing a significant effect was the teacher's physical attractiveness.

A series of separate analyses of variance were performed on each of the 21 questionnaire items. A summary of significant contrasts resulting from the 21 ANOVAS is presented in Table 2. Inspection of this table indicates that the factor of attractiveness accounted for 10 of the 15 significant main effects.

Insert Tables 1 and 2

Confirming the physical attractiveness manipulation, the children readily discriminated attractiveness as depicted in the photographs of all three age groups ($p<.01$) even though the effect was most pronounced in younger teachers ($p<.01$). Further, the children expected the attractive teachers to be better teachers ($p<.05$), more interesting ($p<.01$), more fun to be with ($p<.01$), more willing to play games with them ($p<.01$), and generally superior to unattractive teachers ($p<.01$). Finally, the students expected to feel more comfortable with attractive teachers ($p<.01$). These results

confirm the findings of Heinen, Derlega, & Chaiken, (1977) in that attractive teachers are perceived more favorably than unattractive teachers. On the basis of the Heinen et al. study and the present investigation, it is apparent that there exists a cultural stereotype for physical attractiveness that is functionally operative very early in life. Berscheid and Walster's (1972) suggestion that people generally assume that the outer physical quality of an individual reflects similar inner qualities was generally validated and extended to include young children.

As indicated previously in Table 1, teacher's sex did not produce a significant effect on the cumulative analysis. When considering each questionnaire item separately, only 1 of the 21 items resulted in a significant contrast; the students expected female teachers, as compared to male teachers, to possess qualities more suitable for home visitation ($p<.02$). Therefore, the results generally suggest that children do not hold differential expectations solely on the basis of the teacher's sex. Further, inspection of Table 2 indicates that the child's sex resulted in only one significant contrast, i.e., the males perceived the teachers as relatively older ($p<.05$).

When considering the variable of teacher's age on each questionnaire item separately, the results indicate that the children readily discerned the differences in ages of the

teachers ($p<.01$) and they perceived older teachers as relatively less attractive than younger teachers ($p<.01$). However, the only educationally relevant finding was that the children expected middle aged teachers to be slightly more fun to interact with than either young or elderly teachers ($p<.02$). Consequently, the lack of significant contrasts in the cumulative analysis and the results of the separate item analysis suggest that the children were not generally biased by the teacher's age.

In summary, the separate main effects of the teacher's sex and age, and the effects of students' sex were generally found not to be influential in biasing student expectations. However, the teacher's physical attractiveness had a pronounced effect on student expectations for a variety of teacher behaviors.

As previously indicated the analysis of the cumulative questionnaire produced no significant interactions. On the basis of the analyses employing each questionnaire item as criterion variables only six significant first order interactions were apparent: (a) the children expected the middle aged female teachers to be more capable of explanation than middle aged males and the converse of this was apparent for young and elderly teachers; (b) the children expected elderly male teachers to be less interesting than elderly female teachers; (c) the children expected that attractive male teachers would be less kind than attractive female teachers and converse of this was evident for unattractive teachers;

(d) the children expected the unattractive male teachers to be happier than unattractive female teachers and, to a lesser extent, the converse of this was apparent for attractive teachers; (e) the female children, in comparison to males, expected that attractive teachers would like them more. The converse of this was apparent when considering unattractive teachers; i.e., male students, in contrast to females, expected that unattractive teachers would like them more; and finally (f) the female students, in contrast with males, expected to feel more comfortable with attractive teachers. The converse of this was evident when considering unattractive teachers. Male students, in contrast to females, would feel more comfortable with unattractive teachers. When considering that the significant first order interactions involved only 6 out of a possible 126 contrasts, the significance of these interactions are diminished.

Similar lack of support for the effect of the interactions is gained when considering the second and third order findings. Only 2 significant second order interactions, out of a possible 84 contrasts, were evident: (a) with the exception of young male teachers and middle aged females, the children expected attractive teachers to be more effective third grade teachers; and (b) the children readily distinguished attractive from unattractive teachers with the variable of attractiveness having a more pronounced effect in younger teachers.

Finally, only 2 significant third order interactions resulted out of the possible 21 contrasts. The most salient interpretation of these complex four-way interactions were: (a) the male students expected the elderly attractive female teachers to be the most unfair and the female students expected attractive middle aged male teachers to be the most fair; and (b) generally, the students perceived unattractive teachers to be relatively older than attractive teachers of similar age.

In summary, the interactions among the independent variables of the teacher's age, sex, attractiveness, and the student's sex did not, for the most part, bias the subject's expectations for teacher behaviors. It was assumed, in accordance with Finn (1972) and Kehle et al. (1974) that the expectancy process could not be explained simply and was probably the result of complex relationships among variables. This assumption was based on studies dealing with the teachers' expectations for children's behavior. However, the results of the present study would suggest that children's expectations for teacher behavior, with respect to the variables employed, were largely the result of the single variable of the teacher's physical attractiveness. A possible explanation for this apparent contradiction is that children's expectations may develop along a continuum, from single visual cues such as attractiveness to eventually include, in adulthood, complex interactions among numerous variables. This reasoning is consistent with Piagetion theory (Inhelder &

Piaget, 1968) in that children's characteristically concrete operational thought processes would not incorporate complex interactions among variables in decision making, or more relevantly, in attitude formation.

Discussion

Generally the results indicate that children are systematically biased by the teacher's physical attractiveness. Attractive teachers were perceived as superior to unattractive teachers on several dimensions. It is assumed, in accordance with Bandura (1977), that the children's anticipation of how the teacher will interact with them will influence the children's behavior. The Heinen et al. study indicated that the teacher's attractiveness does, in fact, influence students' expectations but does not significantly affect academic performance. In other words, it may be correct to assume that disliking the teacher does not necessarily preclude learning. However, with respect to the Heinen et al. design, the long term effect of negative attitudes toward the teacher was not addressed. It may be, that over an extended period of an academic year, the motivation of a student to achieve academically would be appreciably diminished. Consequently, studies designed to address the long term effects of children's attitudes toward teachers on academic performance would be beneficial. Further, the present study did not address the

effect that the children's expectations for teacher behaviors may have on the children's peer interactions. It is reasonable to assume that if negative attitudes exist toward the classroom situation, mediated by teacher characteristics, they may affect not only academic but also social performance.

The salient implication of the present study is that, in contrast to several investigations of the expectancy phenomenon, a single variable of attractiveness rather than complex interactions of several variables had the most pronounced effect. It was assumed the children use distinct visual cues, such as attractiveness, in the formation of their expectations of adult teachers, whereas, adults employ several variables in determining their attitudes toward children. Another implication is that in addition to the expectations developed through teacher feedback concerning children's academic performance, the process involves non-academic variables such as the teacher's physical appearance.

Table 1

Analysis of Variance Summary Table for Cumulative Scores

Source	df	MS	F
Teacher's Sex (A)	1	1.36	.02
Teacher's Age (B)	2	21.75	.36
Teacher's Attractiveness (C)	1	568.02	9.46*
Student's Sex (D)	1	12.25	.20
A x B	2	81.50	1.35
A x C	1	6.25	.10
A x D	1	140.02	2.33
B x C	2	8.34	.13
B x D	2	3.06	.05
C x D	1	72.25	1.20
A x B x C	2	136.64	2.27
A x B x D	2	1.50	.02
A x C x D	1	.02	.01
B x C x D	2	40.64	.67
A x B x C x D	2	5.92	.09

*less than .005

Table 2

Analyses of Variance Summary of Significant Contrasts for Each Questionnaire Item

Contrast	Questionnaire Item	MS	F	p
(A) Teacher's Sex	How would you feel if this teacher came to your house to visit?	4.00	5.35	.02
(B) Teacher's Age	How much fun do you think this teacher would be?	3.46	3.80	.02
	How good looking do you think this teacher is?	4.36	5.03	.01
	How old do you think this teacher is?	6.38	23.68	.01
(C) Teacher's Attractiveness	How do you think this teacher can teach third grade?	1.17	3.89	.05
	How good is this teacher's discipline?	2.50	3.80	.05
	How interesting do you think this teacher would be?	5.06	8.04	.01
	How would you rate this teacher?	6.67	10.33	.01
	How much fun do you think this teacher would be?	6.25	6.85	.01
	How happy do you think this teacher is?	1.15	22.06	.01
	How would this teacher play games with you?	4.00	4.98	.01
	How good looking do you think this teacher is?	1.46	16.95	.01
	How would you feel in this teacher's room?	8.02	9.29	.01
	How old do you think this teacher is?	1.77	6.59	.01

Table 2
(Continued)

Contrast	Questionnaire Item	MS	F	p
(D) Student's Sex	How old do you think this teacher is?	1.00	3.71	.05
A x B	How do you think this teacher can explain things to you?	1.52	4.41	.01
	How interesting do you think this teacher would be?	2.25	3.57	.03
A x C	How kind do you think this teacher would be?	2.25	3.87	.04
	How happy do you think this teacher is?	2.50	4.73	.02
C x D	How much do you think this teacher would like you?	6.67	9.22	.01
	How would you feel in this teacher's room?	4.69	5.43	.02
A x B x C	How do you think this teacher can teach third grade?	1.25	4.17	.01
A x B x D	How good looking do you think this teacher is?	2.86	3.30	.03
A x B x C x D	How fair do you think this teacher would be?	2.52	4.15	.01
	How old do you think this teacher is?	1.79	6.67	.01

REFERENCES

Bandura, A. Social learning theory. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1977.

Berscheid, E. & Walster, E. Beauty and the beast. Psychology Today, April 1972, pp. 42.

Clairborn, W. Expectancy effects in the classroom: A failure to replicate. Journal of Educational Psychology, 1969, 60, 377-383.

Finn, J.D. Expectations and the educational environment. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, March 1972.

Fleming, E.S., & Anttonen, R.G. Teacher expectancy or my fair lady. American Educational Research Journal, 1971, 8, 241-252.

Inhelder, B., & Piaget, J. The growth of logical thinking from childhood to adolescence. New York: Basic Books, 1958.

Kehle, T.J., Bramble, W.J., & Mason, E.J. Teachers' expectations: Ratings of student performance as biased by student characteristics. The Journal of Experimental Education, 1974, 1, 54-60.

Mason, E.J. Teacher expectancy bias: What does it mean? Paper presented at the First Annual Conference in School Psychology, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 23, 1972.

Mason, E.J. Teachers' observations and expectations of boys and girls as influenced by biased psychological reports, and knowledge of the effects of bias. Journal of Educational Psychology, 1973, 65, 238-243.

Rosenthal, R. & Jacobson, L. Pygmalion in the classroom, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York, 1966.